/61 cont./

Marriage

After a youth of experimentation, Marquesans usually narrow their interest to one member of the opposite sex, settling down to an informal marital relationship, which is accorded community acceptance and recognition, without any more formalized ceremony than a request to the parents of the girl by the prospective husband. This relationship is called no ho -- "staying or remaining (with someone)." Often another introduced term is used -- matiri'ia -- "married," to which is added 'i te ha'e pure -- "in church," to differentiate those unions with the approval of the clergy.

Although this rather informal relationship is still most common, two factors have produced a recent increase in church marriages. First, an increased knowledge of rudimentary French law on the part of the natives has resulted in the use of French legal procedures to force marriage on recalcitrant suitors. Parents assume an attitude of righteous indignation when a daughter is caught en flagrante or is misled by promises of marriage, and make complaints to government authorities to assuage their wounded honor. Secondly, the church itself has placed great emphasis on a program with the goal of sanctifying all existing unions and all those to come.

Therefore, if a couple's relationship should become obvious to the public, or if parents should feel that a daughter has been cheated in any /62/ way, the chances are quite high that religious and civil pressures, as well as social pressure, will be exerted to make the union a formal one.

As a result of church influence, a couple may be forced into formalizing a long-standing union, which otherwise would have functioned as well as any which did not obtain church blessing.

With or without formalization, separations are not infrequent, especially in the first years of a union. In the absence of legal marriage, one or the other partner merely departs. If there are children, they are divided among parents, in-laws, and friends, depending on the circumstances. The